THE DANISH INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

2015-2017

ENABLING HUMAN RIGHTS

We are mandated to protect and promote human rights nationally and internationally. We have cooperated for more than 20 years with human rights actors from around the world. We have supported civil society organisations in promoting human rights by, for, and with their governments. We have increased the capacity of businesses to respect human rights. And we have worked with state actors to strengthen their capacity for human rights protection.

This work has yielded powerful results and valuable expertise. And it has convinced us that real progress on human rights requires the combined efforts of all actors in society. This progress, however, must be anchored in a human rights system upheld by states, which hold the primary obligation to protect and fulfil human rights.

The context of national human rights protection is being transformed by global trends. Globalisation challenges the capacity of national and international human rights systems to protect and fulfil human rights, just as human rights protection is impaired by the internal weaknesses of states. In the current global context, the legitimacy and coherence of human rights are being increasingly challenged. We must carefully consider the implications of these trends for the global protection of human rights as well as our own international work.

This strategy marks a departure from past priorities in terms of what we do, where we work, and with whom we engage. We have decided to focus our international work on enabling states to protect and fulfil human rights. This, we feel, is a natural extension of the role we play at home as Denmark's National Human Rights Institution. We will also focus on strengthening the international human rights system, as it provides crucial support to states in the protection and promotion of human rights. This new emphasis implies that, from now on, we will leave it to other actors to strengthen the institutional capacity of civil society, whereas civil society for us will remain strategic partners of collaboration in terms of knowledge and resources.

The strategy reflects our ongoing ambition to use our mandate and expertise in ways that maximise our contribution to human rights. We look forward to making this journey with partners seeking the same goal.

THE CHANGE WE WANT

Our Strategy 2015-2017 is based on a theory of change of how we can apply our mandate to **generate sustainable and enduring human rights change** anchored in public institutions and international systems.

We seek, in accordance with the UN Paris Principles, to promote and protect human rights by supporting effective national and international human rights systems.

We will strive to ensure that key national state actors in priority countries increase their capacity to protect and promote human rights. We will do this by providing organisational human rights expertise and human rights knowledge. The improved capacity of national state actors will contribute to **effective and self-sustaining national human rights protection systems in our priority countries.**

We will further strive to ensure that key international actors integrate human rights standards in their policies, priorities, and regulatory frameworks to contribute to the global protection and promotion of human rights. The **integration of human rights norms into regional and international frameworks and standards** will in turn strengthen the national protection and promotion of human rights**.**

This theory of change is grounded in the United Nations human rights-based approach. Our targets, and partners, in this effort are formal duty-bearers that share our goal of ensuring that the change we contribute to will have impact and relevance to duty-bearers and rights-holders alike. We seek to support and empower the state to fulfil its obligations as a duty-bearer. At the same time, we will encourage states to involve citizens in the conduct of public affairs and to carry out public consultation and informed dialogue.

A THEORY OF CHANGE FOR OUR INTERNATIONAL WORK

We believe that sustainable human rights change has to be anchored in public institutions and systems

Promote and protect human rights around the world

GOALS

Strong human rights protection and fulfilment systems. We do this by strengthening:

National actors necessary for development of enduring human rights systems...

International actors that enable human rights protection and fulfilment at the national level

NHRIs	Public Authorities	Justice System	NHRI networks	UN system	Development frameworks	Regional Bodies

OUTCOMES

Effective and selfsustaining national human rights systems in priority countries	Effective integration of human rights into regional and international governmental frameworks and standards on strategic themes

OUTPUTS

Increased capacity of state actors to drive human rights change e.g. monitoring, counseling, operations	Knowledge and standard development on selected issues where there is a need to promote human rights	Increased institutionalisation of human rights among national and international state actors

ACTIVITIES AND INPUTS

Build organisational capacity on human rights	Build human rights expertise	Produce and disseminate new analyses, methods and tools	Identify and convene stakeholders and decision-makers

RATIONALE

The rationale behind this strategy is based on the interrelatedness of the national and international levels of human rights protection.

First, it is our experience that the effective protection and promotion of human rights at a national level requires human rights-compliant legal frameworks and well-functioning state institutions. It is a major challenge to the global protection of human rights that state institutions are often too weak and not sufficiently focused on human rights. We can assist states to make changes where they have the political will to do so. We have decided to focus in the coming years on working with National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), key ministries and the justice system.

Second, the national protection of human rights can be significantly strengthened by cooperating with international actors to integrate human rights into their policies and standards. This includes global and regional organisations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the African Union, the Association

of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union, and others. If these actors promote human rights, they can make a difference, just as they can impair human rights if they do not. We have decided to focus in the coming years on a few global human rights challenges, namely the impact of businesses on human rights, sustainable development, and the challenge to the universality of human rights.

HOW WE WORK

We aim to **build human rights expertise and organisational capacity among our partners** to allow them to drive change on core human rights issues. This could include influencing policy and legislation, supporting monitoring and reporting capacity, cooperating with the international human rights protection system or ensuring robust domestic follow-up on human rights reports.

We will support the integration of human rights into the curricula of educational institutions of justice system actors and build the capacity of NHRIs to carry out human rights education. We will develop partners' capacity to **conduct human rights analysis** to support policy development or other actions to improve domestic human rights implementation. Together with partners, we will identify stakeholders and **convene decision makers** to inspire policy reform and practice change.

To allow partners to support implementation at the national level, we will develop **tools and methods** to transfer and disseminate knowledge on selected themes and the core functions of the human rights system. At the international level, we will engage with global actors to **promote standard-setting** on themes where there is a need to uphold human rights and where we have **developed specific knowledge and expertise**.

This strategy will have substantial implications in terms of our partners, priority countries, and thematic areas. We have chosen to focus on state actors and international systems, while acknowledging that human rights are promoted by a broad range of societal actors. This implies that from now on, we will leave it to other actors to strengthen civil society and to support the implementation of activities on the ground. In our project methodology, however, we will ensure that non-state actors participate in a constructive dialogue with state actors.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To achieve the outcomes of our theory of change, we have identified four strategic priorities for our international work:

1. Human rights institutions in priority countries
2. Global human rights issues
3. Human rights expertise as an instrument for change
4. Effectiveness of our work

HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS IN PRIORITY COUNTRIES

As Denmark's NHRI and an independent state body, we are well-placed to cooperate internationally with public authorities that play a role in the protection and promotion of human rights in their respective countries.

In accordance with the Paris Principles, we have a special focus on partnerships with other NHRIs, and we have extensive experience working with other public authorities that are important to the national protection of human rights.

In this strategy period, our interventions and partnerships will focus on the following actors:
• National Human Rights Institutions
• State agencies with a cross-cutting human rights mandate
• Justice system actors

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

We will support the establishment and strengthening of NHRIs to comply with the UN Paris Principles in their founding acts and in how they carry out their mandates. We will support them by building their capacity to conduct human rights monitoring, reporting, and follow-up; to provide human rights education; and to offer specific expertise on relevant themes.

We will also support the International Coordinating Committee of NHRIs (ICC) by aiding in the development of a strong ICC secretariat capable of mobilising, coordinating, and providing needed support to individual NHRIs in their accreditation processes and their engagement with the international system.

STATE AGENCIES WITH A CROSS-CUTTING HUMAN RIGHTS MANDATE

For agencies with a human rights-related mandate, such as justice or interior ministries, we will help them develop policies and legislation and will aid in the review of existing legal frameworks to address inadequate human rights protection and lack of compliance. We will support the development of human rights monitoring and reporting, including effective processes to gather information and carry out stakeholder analyses and facts-based human rights dialogue with broad segments of society.

JUSTICE SYSTEM ACTORS

We will primarily target two types of actors within the justice system: the police and primary justice providers. With the police, we will seek to ensure human rights-compliant policing, and will cooperate with police academies to develop context-specific curricula and education tools. For primary justice providers, which include legal aid networks, paralegals, and local courts, we will work to improve the link between the formal and informal justice systems, and to integrate human rights into all relevant structures to secure robust and sustainable access to justice.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY NO 2

GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

We are part of the international human rights system, and enjoy access to international forums and the global network of NHRIs and its regional chapters. Based on our research expertise and practical experience, we have been able to successfully influence international and regional systems. Where possible, we will seek to multiply this leverage by supporting the institutional capacity of the international network of NHRIs and working through NHRI representative bodies.

A limited number of human rights themes have been selected for this strategic period. In selecting these themes, we have prioritised issues with emerging agendas or where there is a gap in the setting or interpretation of standards.

Thematic focal areas have been selected based on the following criteria:
- The relevance of the theme to the global human rights context
- The maturity of the norms, regulations, and systems for human rights protection
- The relevance of the theme for our partners in priority countries
- our potential to achieve substantial and measurable impact within the strategy period
- The existence of in-house expertise.

Based on these criteria, we have chosen the following thematic focal areas for the strategic period 2015-2017:
- Human rights and sustainable development
- Human rights and business
- Human rights and universality

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The global development context implies increasing pressure on human rights. Millions of people have been lifted out of poverty due to globalisation and economic development over the past three decades. But the environmental costs of this development in terms of climate change, desertification, air pollution, and depletion of water resources have proven to be unsustainable in both environmental and human terms. At the same time, despite economic growth the gap between rich and poor has increased globally. This has spurred a shift to a sustainability-focused global development agenda. In implementing this agenda, human rights principles and institutions will need to create a global development framework that is both sustainable and just in its outcomes.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND BUSINESS

Human rights are inextricably linked with business. Rights can be violated if business is not carried out responsibly. At the same time, fulfilment of human rights cannot be achieved without the jobs, revenues, infrastructure, technology, and services that business generates. Economic globalisation creates challenges and opportunities for states to manage the impacts of businesses on people. States are beginning to integrate human rights into the monitoring and regulation of business, and are utilising the private sector to play a role in meeting human rights and development priorities. At the same time, global actors are recognising that national-level efforts require an enabling international environment where human rights are integrated into regional and transnational frameworks on trade and investment.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND UNIVERSALITY

In the current global context, the legitimacy and coherence of human rights are increasingly challenged. Issues such as sexuality, religion, and gender equality have become lynchpins for larger discussions of the social and political legitimacy of human rights, and on the possible clashes between human rights and popular and democratic processes. In other cases, some norms are promoted at the expense of others. A contextual understanding of these dynamics is a necessary operational condition for our work in many partner countries. Crafting a common understanding on contentious issues is essential to promoting human rights in a pluralistic context, and ensures a more nuanced and less confrontational debate at the international level.

HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTISE AS A DRIVER FOR CHANGE

Expertise shapes our ability to identify problems and devise actions, allocate resources and adapt approaches to address them.

The key driver through which we will seek to impact change is the Institute's operational, policy-, and research-based human rights expertise. Our mandate includes research as well as applied human rights work, meaning that our working methods combine academic research with practical experience gained in the implementation of human rights projects in Denmark and internationally. We combine this human rights expertise with knowledge of the geographic, political, and economic contexts in which we work.

In this strategy period, we will focus on strengthening three types of expertise:
1. Legal expertise on human rights norms and standards
2. Contextual expertise on the stakeholders, priorities, and institutions where we work
3. Methodological expertise on technical, organisational, and political processes. It is the combination of these three kinds of expertise that allows us to effect change.

EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR WORK

To secure and maximise our impact and to remain relevant in a context of sharp competition, we must have a constant focus on improving the effectiveness of our work. We have identified three components to achieving this task:

1. Focus on priority countries and increasing presence
2. Emphasise strategic collaboration
3. Measure and document the impact of our work.

FOCUS ON PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND INCREASING PRESENCE

The Institute's partnerships for human rights change are strongest, most successful and effective where we have a long-term presence on the ground. Human rights partnerships with state entities are more cumbersome than partnerships with civil society and more vulnerable to political fluctuations. Therefore, we must be present in the countries in which we work in order to understand the context and to rapidly respond and adapt to changing political environments. A local presence is also necessary to create stronger partnerships, build credibility, and take advantage of opportunities for alignment with national and international actors, policies, and standards.

Lastly, we need to modify our organisation to recognise that expertise and capacity are growing in our target countries, and we must be equipped to draw on these resources in our work. At present, the Institute has only established formal offices in a few priority countries, but maintains individually deployed staff in a range of locations.

We will identify countries in which to build our local presence based on the following criteria:
- Our ability to align our theory of change with the context and with local state actors
- The political will to engage in human rights reform
- The commitment and capability of local partners
- The country's relevance to regional dynamics
- The ability of the Institute to add value
- The cost of impact relative to other countries
- The availability of long-term resources.

EMPHASISE STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

A stronger focus on strategic collaboration and division of responsibility will improve leverage and the effectiveness of our efforts to positively influence the development of human rights. In our priority countries, our main targets are state actors. To infuse knowledge and expertise, however, it might be necessary to enter into strategic collaboration with civil society or academic actors that can support the state.

In the strategic period we will, as stated in the theory of change, pursue cooperation with NHRIs, central public authorities and justice system actors in priority countries as partners in change. We will also secure strategic collaboration with Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other UN agencies in priority countries to coordinate the effort to support selected actors. Finally, in the selection of thematic focal areas, we will pursue strategic collaboration with regional mechanisms, the ICC and its regional chapters, the UN, civil society organisations, research institutions, and business actors.

Most of the Institute's current funding is granted without competition. We envision that in the future we will compete in a global and increasingly competitive market for the funding available to support human rights and democratization. For us to preserve the competences we have developed and to continue to pursue the goals we have defined, we need to expand and diversify our funding base and seek strategic collaboration with a larger number of donors.

MEASURE AND DOCUMENT THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK

Measuring progress on human rights is often a challenge. It is nevertheless important and necessary to ensure that our work has relevance and that we can gain the necessary organisational learning. Historically, we have not sufficiently focused on documenting and communicating the results of our work. Due to its narrow and clearly defined strategic goals, outcomes, and outputs, the revised theory of change will improve the Institute's ability to document and measure the impact of our work at both the organisational and program levels. We want to be held accountable for the outcomes defined in the theory of change. Thus, we will systematically document, monitor, and evaluate our results.